

acknowledged that Afghanistan-based ISIS-K and al-Qaida terrorists have the intent and are acquiring the capability to strike the United States. ISIS-K could threaten our homeland in as little as 6 months. The Biden administration still doesn't have basing or access agreements in neighboring countries for its supposed plan to hit terrorists from "over the horizon." No wonder our adversaries are testing this President's resolve to protect American personnel and American interests.

A complex attack against U.S. forces in Syria last week may well have been carried out at the behest of Iran. The administration isn't saying. They need to come clean about who is responsible and how they intend to respond.

We know Tehran badly wants the United States and its partners out of Syria and Iraq and to continue to threaten Israel and other U.S. partners. What we don't know is what the Biden administration plans to do about it.

Even where progress should be easy, this administration finds ways to actually mess things up. For example, there is strong, bipartisan agreement about the threat the People's Republic of China poses to international security and specifically to American interests—case in point: Beijing's recent publicly reported efforts to test hypersonic weapons and advance their nuclear capabilities. China is also dramatically expanding the naval capabilities that they openly use to harass other nations.

Both Republicans and Democrats would welcome a clear and coherent China strategy from this administration, but all we are getting is a muddled mess. A few days ago, no sooner did President Biden offer comments on his own Taiwan policy than the White House staff rapidly walked it back. So it makes you want to ask, who is in charge over there—the President or the Press Secretary? American administrations have a tradition of handling Taiwan with something called strategic ambiguity. I am afraid the Biden team is taking that a little too literally. Even they themselves seem to have no idea what they are doing.

President Biden likes to say something like: Show me your budget, and I will tell you what you value. But President Biden's own request for the defense budget didn't even keep up with President Biden's inflation. The White House proposed to cut defense funding after inflation. And here in the Senate, Democrats' partisan appropriations process seems to shortchange defense in favor of runaway domestic spending. Even their ostensibly China-focused bill from earlier this year would not have included any funding for the kinds of advanced defense capabilities that we need to keep pace if it weren't for an amendment offered by Senator SASSE.

Even the NDAA is stuck in limbo. The defense authorization bill is our most basic opportunity to shape secu-

rity policy. It is a core duty for the Senate majority, the bare minimum, but Democrats have completely neglected the NDAA and the traditional robust and real floor process that it will need. They are too busy debating how much socialism to unleash on the country to look out for our troops, our veterans, and our national security.

This unseriousness will leave Americans less safe. It is just that simple.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVES SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Omar Antonio Williams, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to seek unanimous consent to proceed to the consideration of two very qualified nominees to USAID. They are the kind of nominees who, in previous Congresses, would have been approved, without debate, through voice vote. I will make the motion, expecting, unfortunately, an objection. Then I will proceed to comments on why I think this is incredibly damaging to the United States to not proceed forward with these nominees.

Thus, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations: Calendar No. 323 and Calendar No. 337; that the nominations be confirmed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order on the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, EcoHealth Alliance received hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer grants and contracts, including \$65 million from USAID. This company and their research may well hold in their hands the smoking gun to getting to the bottom of COVID's origins, and millions of families who lost loved ones deserve closure.

Any Federal Agency that has given them money must be transparent and

provide Congress all information on what EcoHealth used that money for. We asked for this information months ago. USAID has failed to do so, and that is why I am here to object to these two unanimous consent requests.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I would just ask unanimous consent for two incredibly qualified, noncontroversial Administrators at USAID.

Isobel Coleman is the nominee to be the USAID Deputy Administrator. She is a seasoned foreign policy professional who has been nominated by the President to oversee and provide strategic leadership over the Agency's programs. She has been previously confirmed by this body by unanimous consent. There are, as far as I can tell, no objections to her candidacy based upon the merits of it; and there were no objections to her candidacy to serve as our Ambassador to the U.N. for Management and Reform in December of 2014. She is a former Ambassador, and she has spent 20 years in the study and practice of global development. She has worked in the public and the private sectors.

I ask unanimous consent to proceed to the nomination of Marcela Escobari, the nominee for USAID Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean. Ms. Escobari is a regional expert on Latin America and the Caribbean. She has previously served in the exact same role at the Agency, and she has done really incredible work reinforcing U.S. support work for Peace Colombia. She has been heavily engaged in the long-term development plan for Haiti, as well as in Congress's plans to double funding for Central America to try to stem the root causes of migration.

I think it is incredibly concerning that this blockade of capable diplomats, professional diplomats, continues on the Senate floor. By this time in the Trump administration, President Trump had had 22 Ambassadors who had been confirmed by the U.S. Senate, 17 of them by voice vote. Thus far, President Biden has had 4 Ambassadors confirmed.

Today, I was asking for consideration not of Ambassadors but of professionals who oversee the expenditure of U.S. taxpayer dollars abroad. There is nothing that Senate Republicans can do to stop the expenditure of taxpayer dollars in the Caribbean or Latin America. What they are preventing is the appointment and seating of individuals who oversee that funding, who represent us abroad.

This blockade—this unprecedented blockade—has never happened before in the history of the Senate. This kind of obstruction of standing in the way of the President's diplomatic team being seated compromises our national security. It makes us weaker as a nation.

As the President heads to the G20, he doesn't have Ambassadors seated to